R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 015 077 RC 002 143

NEW PROSPECTS FOR RURAL YOUTH.

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PUB DATE 23 OCT 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.48 10P.

DESCRIPTORS- ATTITUDES, COMMUNITY, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGEMENT, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES (JOBS), FEDERAL PROGRAMS, FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, HEALTH, HOUSING, JOB SKILLS, MIGRATION, OPPORTUNITIES, *RURAL AREAS, *RURAL YOUTH, RACIAL ATTITUDES, YOUTH,

WHEN THE MATERIAL WEALTH OF OUR NATION IS COUPLED WITH OUR GREATEST NATURAL RESOURCE, THE YOUTH OF AMERICA, THE PROSPECTS OF A BRIGHT FUTURE BECOME EXCELLENT, AND EACH OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE DESERVES THE ASSURANCE THAT HE OR SHE WILL SHARE FULLY IN THESE PROSPECTS. HOWEVER, UP TO THE PRESENT, ONE SEGMENT OF OUR YOUTH GROUP, THE RURAL PORTION, HAS FAILED TO SHARE EQUALLY IN THE WEALTH AND OPPORTUNITIES OF OUR NATION. TO OVERCOME THIS INEQUITY, FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT MUST MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR RURAL YOUTH TO HAVE THE SAME OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS THE YOUTH OF OUR CITIES. OF THESE THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT, THE LOCAL ECHELON IS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND SHOULD PROVIDE THE IMAGINATION, CREATIVITY, AND INITIATIVE FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF RURAL AREAS. OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT MUST FIRST COME TO GRIPS WITH LINGERING SOCIAL AND RACIAL INJUSTICE, THEN ESTABLISH GOOD EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY LEAD TO OPEN SOCIETIES WITH FULL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL YOUTH. THIS SPEECH WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE ON RURAL YOUTH, OCTOBER 23-26, 1967, WASHINGTON, D. C., SPONSORED JOINTLY BY THE U. S. DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, INTERIOR, AND LABOR, OEO, AND THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON YOUTH OPPORTUNITY. (ES)

ED015077

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General Session

Speech presented at
NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE
ON RURAL YOUTH
October 23-26, 1967
Washington, D. C.

RECEIVED JAN 5 1968 NMSU E.R.I.C.

NEW PROSPECTS FOR RURAL YOUTH

Hon. Hubert H. Humphrey
Vice President of the United States

You can plainly see tonight that the spirit of youth has gripped us, because Secretary Freeman said that it was just a few years ago that we were at the University of Minnesota together. We have been compressing time, and are beginning to feel younger every minute.

First of all, I want to express my thanks to the Secretary for permitting me to join in this conference. I think it is fair to say that you have heard from him a message of sincere optimism and great promise. I like the positive note that Secretary Freeman has given to us, and the very solid evidence of social progress that is so much a part of the present American scene.

I want to ask you tonight to join me in thinking young. Being young and thinking young are not exactly the same thing.

A Young Nation

This is a young nation. Everything about it is young. When you think of the verve and the vitality of America, it tells you about its youth. When you see America on the march--its industry, its science, its technology--everywhere there is an emphasis on youth.

I was very much moved tonight by the Secretary's analysis of disillusionment, disenchantment, the difference between a healthy discontent and a sick disenchantment, the difference between dissent and disillusionment.

We have gone through a rather difficult week in our nation. We have gone through a rather unhappy weekend in our nation's capital.

Let me tell you the contrast that I saw. I was at the United Nations' Concert Saturday night, with Mrs. Humphrey and many others. It was our privilege to invite a very esteemed and dear friend to be the concert conductor, the famed Pablo Casals, one of the truly great spirits of our century and of our time.

They Were Beautiful

On the stage with him were hundreds of young people from Howard University and Catholic University in a great choral group. They had had only a week

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of rehearsals, only one or two days with the great maestro, and when they first sang, it was good, but it was evident. But then, as the evening went on, the music just poured from them like a mighty river. And they were beautiful. It was simply the most moving experience that one could ever hope to have.

I couldn't help but think of it when I went home--what a contrast to what I saw on the television of ill manners, filth, a disgusting performance in the name of dissent. And how many young people were deceived by a few who wanted to deceive them on that Saturday here in Washington! There were thousands of young people that came here out of conscience and conviction to express their concern, but they were used by some who had no conscience, no concern, and were seeking only to exercise what they thought was the right of abusive language and vulgarity.

When I awakened this morning and turned on the television and saw the debris that was left at the Pentagon building, it sickened me. And particularly when I saw young GI's in fatigues having to clean up this mess, and when I heard that some young men and women who were insisting on being arrested were being given $25 fines, I thought maybe it would have been better if they had had to clean up their own mess.

Young People at Work

You know the young people of America today are marvelous. Most of them are socially concerned. They are bright. They are at work.

There are six million or more of them in our universities, seeking to improve themselves, to build for a better life. There are thousands of them who volunteer for the Peace Corps, many more than we can take. Thousands of them are volunteering for VISTA, Volunteers in Service to America. A quarter of a million of our college students last year volunteered to help the needy and to help students who had been deprived of a good education. Half a million high school seniors who never got paid a nickel volunteered their time last year to help young people in the grade schools. Thousands of other young people work in hospitals, in community agencies and community programs.

This is the spirit of America. This is the youth power of America.

But somehow these examples get lost in the public mind. It seems these days that some people have confused honest, dedicated, conscientious, concern and dissent with vulgarity and abusiveness. This does not help the cause of democracy, and it does not help the cause of human decency or human dignity.

Deceived

I was unhappy this weekend because I think those who really wanted to express their concern about many things were deceived. I don't like

people who use other people for their own selfish purposes.

I have many of these feelings because I know young people. I happen to be the Chairman of the President's Youth Opportunity Council and, like Secretary Freeman, I travel around this country a great deal.

Youth power, I believe, is a tremendous source of energy and good. It is one of the nation's greatest natural resources--a resource of strength and of energy and of leadership for today and for tomorrow.

But I regret to say that all too often it is a resource that we are wasting. That is why this conference was called by the Departments of Agriculture; Interior; Labor; Health, Education, and Welfare; the Office of Economic Opportunity; the Vice President's Office and the President's Council on Youth Opportunity.

You have been invited to discuss the needs of a very important group of American young people, those who live in rural America.

Prospects

Your theme is "Prospects." And America's prospects today, as the Secretary of Agriculture has so vividly pointed out, are tremendous. They are dramatic. Our country is rich and powerful. America's farms, as you better know than I, produce a greater abundance than any other farms in the world. And that abundance is surely going to increase.

For the first time in the history of mankind, there is a nation that can satisfy the material needs of each of its citizens.

Every young person should have one assurance above all others--the assurance that he or she will fully share in these prospects.

Rural Poverty

But the statistics say that many who live in rural areas are not sharing adequately now:

The largest number of poor youth live in rural areas. About one-third of these young people in rural America live in substandard housing. For every 77 rural youngsters who reach working age, there are only 100 jobs.

Twenty-two percent of all rural five-year-olds in 1960 were in kindergarten. In the cities, the figure was 46 percent. The average rural teenager completes about nine years of school. The figure is over twelve years in the city. There are fewer doctors, hospitals, clinics and nurses per capita in rural areas than in the cities.

Moreover, the remedies available today for these inequalities have not

been adequately used in rural America:

Our education assistance programs are more frequently and fully used by city schools than by rural schools.

Health Assistance

Our health assistance programs serve the cities more than the country.

Only about half of the nation's rural counties are served by local offices of the state employment services. Yet each of the urban counties has at least one, and often several local employment offices.

Communities in rural America are scattered, and not concentrated. Their problems often are not susceptible to treatment by large-scale programs. And I think it is fair to say that in this day and age much of the thinking and planning of government is urban-oriented, from urban-oriented minds.

Local governments in rural America, moreover, are often unaware of state and federal assistance that is available to them.

No Labels

I have found that many local government officials who come to Washington to look for some help are like a person going into a supermarket and finding that there are all kinds of goodies on the shelf, but there are no labels. They wonder what they are getting, if they get anything at all. Most of the time, they find nothing.

So what we have tried to do in recent months is to put together a catalog of community programs that are available. We also have a simplified application, which finds its way to the proper agency of the government no matter where you send it.

Often, too, the local governments' tax base is too small to support the kind of local initiatives that would enable them to take advantage of federal rural assistance programs.

Freedom of Choice

The material disadvantages which affect many young people in rural areas literally conspire to deprive them of one of our most basic American freedoms, freedom of choice--the choice of where to live, the choice of job, the choice of your future.

This is perhaps the greatest tragedy of all, and that is the challenge before this conference and this nation. Rural America must offer these young people opportunities to learn and work equal to those available in

the cities. Government--federal, state and local--must make it possible for rural youth to have exactly the same options and the same opportunities as their city cousins in any city in the land.

Between 1950 and 1960, about eleven million Americans migrated to the cities from the farms and small towns. Seventy percent of us now live in cities, on one percent of the land. And this trend continues today. In the next 33 years, there will be one hundred million more Americans.

Where are they going to live? How are they going to live? What kind of life will they have? Are they all going to live in the great crowded metropolitan centers?

High Hopes, No Skills

The largest proportion of the new migrants to the city are young. Indeed, about 200,000 young Americans living in rural areas today will have been drawn or forced into the city within a year. Most of them will arrive with high hopes. Some of them will arrive without the skill to support themselves or an adequate education. Many will find themselves confined to slum apartments, trapped in an alien environment.

And what has not happened in many areas of rural America--I repeat, what has not happened in many areas of rural America--is a major cause of what has happened in many of the neighborhoods of urban America.

In New York City, for example, more than one-third of the enrollees in the Neighborhood Youth Corps program were from rural America. Many come from some of the more backward rural areas, totally unadjusted to urban industrial life.

They come to Chicago, to Cleveland, to Detroit, to Philadelphia, to New York, only to be lost, swallowed up in the impersonality of the city, finding refuge on relief and welfare rolls. That is not the American answer to human problems.

Population Boom

By the year 2000, as I have said, we are going to have a tremendous increase in population, and we have to think ahead, plan ahead, for everything. Are there enough classrooms, universities, hospitals, doctors, other professional people to serve them? What kind of America will they find?

The challenge, as I see it, is to provide every citizen--and especially the young ones--no matter where he lives or who he is, with a full measure of opportunity and a full measure of choice.

In the rural areas, that does not mean recreating the mythical good old

days down on the farm. They were never that good, and you know it.

Modern Living

It does mean extending modern living to rural areas. In the 1930's, modernization meant rural electrification, the REA, and movie theaters in every town. In the 1940's, it meant in part hard-surfaced roads, so that people could get back and forth.

What does it mean now? I think it means airports, for one thing, capable of handling short-hop jets. It means community colleges, good ones; modern hospitals and good doctors. It means the very best in elementary and secondary education. It means also in a modern community golf courses and ball parks--recreation. It may mean drama groups and art classes in addition to church socials and lemonade. And it means economic visibility--reinvestment, new job opportunities, a growing tax base.

Let's face it. The young man or woman today who listens to the transistor radio or gets a peek at television is not going to be content with horse-and-buggy living. They are going to leave, unless there is a better life for them available in areas other than the great cities.

Now, that kind of progress is possible. We are not talking about a dream world or a theory. Let me give you two examples.

Huntsville

Huntsville, Alabama, used to be a small Southern town, a place where people were born and died, but where they spent little time in between. Then the TVA went into action. Huntsville got access to electric power at cheap rates. It got access to water for transport and for recreation. Industries came, then scientific and space installations moved in, and other industries followed. New stores began to meet the needs of new customers. The quality of education improved. The University of Alabama put in a branch university. New taxpayers built new schools.

Huntsville is today a good place not only to be from, but to ~~me~~ b. It is a going establishment.

Tenco

Another good example occurred in south-central Iowa. Ten counties joined together in an association called Tenco. They were able to pool their resources of services, raw materials, planners and leaders, to provide many of the attractions that our metropolitan areas no longer offer--inexpensive land for industry, business, housing and parks, clean air and clean water, and a good labor force. Together the Tenco counties were large enough to use federal programs efficiently. They could hire a good lawyer to examine these programs, and then good planners.

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They used resources available under the Public Works and Economic Development Act to attract industry. They built a technical school with funds available under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

With assistance from the Department of Labor, Tenco established a pilot project which is now demonstrating how a rural area can develop a comprehensive manpower training program to recruit, test, train and find jobs for its citizens.

The Tenco counties have doubled hog and cattle production with the counsel of the United States Department of Agriculture's Technical Action Panels. Today, per-family income in Tenco has doubled. Eight years ago the loan limit at the bank was $20,000; it is now between $80,000 and $90,000.

Local Initiative

Tenco illustrates what I consider to be the most important ingredient in any program for progress, rural or urban, in America today. Its success was the result of local imagination, local creativity, local initiative from the very beginning.

Tenco's leaders decided what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it. And then they turned to Washington for assistance. Now that's the kind of help--support for local initiative--that the federal government can best provide. This is the partnership that we talk about.

It is a partnership in which there is no dominant force, but in which each shares to the best of his ability. This partnership includes federal, state and local government as well as private groups.

I think this conference is going to discover many ways in which we can improve federal and state services to rural areas.

Rural Guidelines

Certainly we can make the guidelines for some of our programs more appropriate for rural application. For instance, we can authorize higher expenditures for transportation, an obvious necessity. Perhaps the term "rural" itself requires a new definition. I think it does.

We can compensate in our manpower programs for the lack of training facilities in rural areas, perhaps through the use of more residential centers for training on the Job Corps model.

We surely need to find better ways of reaching rural youth through the state employment services. Most of our rural youth have never seen a state employment office.

The Smaller Communities Program of the U. S. Employment Service, established on an experimental basis in 1959, is now serving more than 40

rural counties in several states, but it is only a drop in the bucket.

We need to press forward our efforts to improve the quality and the availability of education and health care in rural areas.

Private Support Needed

And we must enlist the support of private enterprise more than ever, for it is private investment that is ultimately going to make a self-sustaining success of our rural America.

Today, of the nation's 28,800 manufacturing establishments with over 100 employees, only 2,062 are located in rural counties. Is it any wonder that there is a population drain from these counties?

Agri-business is but one part of the private sector that has been moving away from metropolitan areas, with the canning industry and the meat-packing industry in the lead.

Farmers' marketing and purchasing cooperatives have also been investing heavily and building outside the metropolitan areas.

Federal Role

What more should we do to encourage this? The federal government can help stimulate other types of industry to move into rural areas by using the economic weight of government contracts for research, development and production. This year alone your government will be spending $16 billion in research and development contracts.

Is your local college getting some of this money? If it isn't, speak up.

We also can and do use our equal employment statutes to require industries on government contracts not to discriminate against local workers.

But let me stress again that most of the initiative required to attract new industry is going to have to come from the rural people themselves. Opportunity moves in where things are happening, where the action is, where local people and local leadership prove that they want to see the community grow.

Local Government

This also means making state and local government modern, responsive, progressive, with good people at the helm in every office. It means that the services of government must be geared to this age of science and technology, to the expansion of our industrial base, to the health and well-being of our people.

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George Bernard Shaw was a caustic observer, and he put it pretty bluntly: "The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want; and if they can't find them, they make them."

I like that. That is what you call ambition--making your opportunities and seizing them.

Just a simple thing--zoning practices will have to be improved to accommodate new businesses and new people. That is a very mundane subject, but without it, there will be no new business.

New housing provisions may be required in your locality, your county or your state. In this age of mobility, even sites for mobile homes may be needed to attract new residents. Newcomers may want a furnished unit in an apartment motel rather than a separate house. Leasing arrangements will need to be more flexible in a majority of towns.

Property Taxes

Traditional property taxes may no longer be the most flexible or economical instrument for financing schools and other public facilities in growing communities.

Natural recreational resources can be exploited, developed for an important economic return.

Regional planning, as they discovered in Tenco, is a must. Twenty-six states are now moving toward multi-county development efforts. And let me predict that the result will not be to weaken local governments, but to strengthen them as they become able to draw upon the resources of their neighboring communities.

Lingering Social Injustice

Finally, many rural communities in the United States are going to have to come to grips with lingering social and racial injustice. Responsible local government elected by the people--all of the people--courts where justice never blinks, decent and open housing, social harmony--those are fundamental prerequisites that any American community must offer today if it expects to attract people and enterprises interested in progress.

I meet regularly with some of the biggest business leaders in this country, and the first thing they ask when they are considering putting a plant in a town is: "What kind of educational system does it have?" and "What are the plans for the next ten years?"

Number two, they want to know: What are the community attitudes? Is there racial hostility? Is there labor-management hostility? Is there

urban-rural hostility?

Then they look at the other things, like a labor force, the availability of electrical power, transportation, and so forth.

Open Societies

Without open societies and full opportunity in rural America, moreover, I don't think we'll ever be able to keep the young people there. We will not be able to stem the flow of migration to our cities, no matter how much physical amenities may improve.

I know these suggestions call for some far-reaching changes which are going to require a high level of political courage and imagination. But if we really want to make rural life a significant alternative in America today--if we really want to give rural young people prospects instead of props, opportunity instead of relief, education instead of consolation--then rural Americans are going to have to commit themselves now, politically, socially, personally, to social progress.

There need never be any rivalry or competition between rural America and urban America. Poverty of the purse and poverty of the spirit are not confined to either. They must be fought as common enemies in both places. We are talking of a national problem requiring a national commitment.

The commitment is vital to the health of American democracy in this, the last third of the 20th century.

President Johnson put it this way:

"History records a long hard struggle to establish man's right to go where he pleases and live where he chooses. It took many centuries--and many bloody revolutions--to break the chains that bound him to a particular plot of land, or confined him within the walls of a particular community. We lose that freedom when our children are obliged to live someplace else if they want a job or if they want a decent education."

The President has made a great plea for equal opportunity. If we work together, this whole nation can develop as one--rural and urban together--so that the American right of free choice will be a reality.